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AUTHOR Holmquest, Anne
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ABSTRACT

Noting that in argument theory there are three contemporary perspectives--(1) the constructivist/interactionist approach, (2) the social theory approach, and (3) the philosophical perspective focusing on validity and reasons--this paper explains the weakness of following the first approach in argument and examines some implications of a commitment to the second approach. It then suggests that the term "force" be explored as an important concept to the perspective that should be emphasized--the philosophical. It contends that argument is a process, though not in the way constructivists conceive of it: that argument involves speech as action, as the social theorists define it: and that argument theories should also include attention to validity claims and the process of invention. The paper points out that the present controversies in argument theory can be framed by the question, "What is the relationship of argument one to argument two?" and describes the argument one/argument two distinction by explaining its origin and offering some more useful questions. (FL)

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THE PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE IN ARGUMENT: REASONS, VALIDITY, AND FORCE

by

Anne Holmquest

University of Iowa

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In argument theory there are three contemporary perspectives: the constructivist/interactionist approach--formulated by Charles Willard; the social theory approach--focused on the work of Jürgen Habermas and elaborated mainly by Brant Burleson; and the philosophical perspective--focused on validity and reasons. This essay will explain the weaknesses of following the constructivist approach in argument and examine some implications of a commitment to the social theory approach, then suggest that the term "force" be explored as an important concept to the perspective we should emphasize--the philosophical. Argument is a process, I will contend, but not in the way the constructivists conceive of it. And argument involves speech as action, but our theories should include attention to validity claims (as the social theory does); and the process of invention (which social theory does not). If we want to learn to argue better, neither of the two approaches can completely capture that.

Argument is not a thing, it is the product of action: arguments are the structures that result from a series of utterances, each of which has a function. Our primary attention

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in argument theory should be to the language peculiar to argument. We should study the functions of language--the forces of utterances--that pertain to arguments in whatever field of endeavor they occur. Further, although the present controversies in argument theory can be framed by the question "What is the relationship of argument-1 to argument-2?", I will describe the argument-1/argument-2 distinction by explaining its origin and offer some questions we might find more useful.

The Constructivist Approach

In 1975, when Wayne Brockriede asked the Speech community "Where is Argument?"[1] he had an answer. Argument "is potentially everywhere," he said because it is not a thing to be looked for but a perspective people take.[2] Two years later Brockriede, in a specific response to Daniel O'Keefe, maintained that arguments as products are the content in the process of arguing. But he expressed a commitment to analyzing arguments so as to better understand the process of arguing.[3] In his article focusing on Brockriede's concept of argument, Daniel O'Keefe created the argument-1/argument-2 distinction by defining these two senses of argument:

> On the one hand it refers to a kind of utterance or a sort of communicative act. This sense of the term I call "argument-1". . .On the other hand, "argument" sometimes refers to a particular kind of interaction. . . .Crudely put, an argument-1 is something one person makes (or gives or presents or utters), while an argument-2 is something two or more persons have (or engage in). Arguments-1 are thus on a par with promises, commands, apologies, warnings, invitations, orders, and the like. . .[4]

When Charles Willard joined the discussion of the concept(s) of argument, he called his contribution a "reformulation" of argument. That was probably an accurate description. Obscuring the first part of O'Keefe's definition, that argument-1 was a kind of communication or speech act just as promises, apologies, and warnings are; Willard took argument-1 to mean argument-as-thing.[5] He wrote about the non-utility of diagrams for the description and criticism of argument-1 and made a case for the study of argument-2 (as process, interaction) as the overriding influence in argument theory and criticism. In other words, he took the part of O'Keefe's definition that was "crudely put" and gave priority to argument-2. About argument-as-process, Willard writes,

> There appears to be agreement, although these writers [Brockriede, O'Keefe, and Joseph Wenzel] do not explicitly recognize it, that argument-as-process ought to be the organizing model since communication theory in general is increasingly based on a processual view of reciprocal perspective-taking. The other sense(s) of "argument" ought to be consistent with, to take their form from, a view of argument-as-process.[6]

There are two main drawbacks to Willard's vision for argument theory. First, his approach gives secondary importance to language, the medium for expressing and transferring arguments. Instead, he emphasizes the relationship of social actors more than the procedure by which they communicate or the substance of that communication. Willard demonstrates his lack of interest in the linguistic aspects of argument by saying, "Words are only one aspect of rationality; and in some respects, they are the least important parts of rational thought."[7]

In accordance with his belief that words are only one aspect of rationality, Willard shows that he denies the usefulness of argument-1 as defined, and explains his own definition of argument:

> There is no sense here of argument as a unit of discourse or unit of meaningful utterance which one person produces for another. . .The term "argument" is construed here as a species of interaction which is often, though not exclusively, productive of serial predicative speech. It is not a kind of reasoning so much as a kind of relationship into which people enter.[8]

The weakness of this definition comes from what it disallows. The ability to speak in an argument may be only one sign of rationality, but it is a very important one. And besides, we can study it. The other drawback to accepting Willard's reformulation of argument is that no argument crit. , even as "ethnomethodologist" can appreciate the perspectives of the social actors doing the arguing.[9] Willard urges the argument theorist to inquire into the meanings which social acts have for their actors, to see how they construe social reality, and to understand the assumptions underlying the procedural rules the actors develop in the process of arguing.[10] But to me that seems an impossible task for the theorist because, as Willard admits,

> If argument is a "kind of interaction" and, therefore, a kind of "social relationship," it is probable that a statement such as "we are having an argument" will lead social actors to negotiate a definition of situation which embraces certain subjective rules which serve to govern the interaction. As Shibutani has argued, each social relationship is a unique social world.[11]

Willard's theory focuses on significant things to study--social relationships, "situated perceptions," and the "cog-

nitive complexity" of social actors--but for argument theory's sake? A reading of his essays will make one see implications for the study of sociology and psychology, but his specific formulation of argument is not useful for studying the kind of rationality that becomes manifest in the words and propositions of argument.

What is the connection between the procedures individual social actors negotiate for themselves in an interaction and some "public" set of rules for communicating in argument? Linguists long ago recognized the distinction between competence and performance. If arguments are acts constructed out of language, it could be productive to search for a "deep structure" of rules that serve as public rules or conventional procedures in the construction of arguments. (For instance, accepted lines of reasoning such as reasoning by sign, analogy, or example are examples of such conventions). My point is this: if we want to advance, modify, or accept arguments, or appreciate them as critics, then we must conceive of the process of argument in such a way that we can evaluate arguments on the basis of soundness.

Relative to this issue, Willard faults Toulmin for creating a model that includes "data," "backing," and "warrants" when no one actually thinks in Toulmin models. Perhaps no one ever found the Toulmin model to be innately his/hers (even Toulmin), but we have acquired the capacity to think that way. That others are familiar with such a map allows us to communicate what we mean. Through the use of language conventions, John

Searle contends, "whatever can be meant can be said."[12] If Toulmin's model does not adequately aid us to express what we mean in argument, maybe another set of conventions will.

Argument is a process, but not in the way the constructivists would have us believe. Argument is a process in the following sense. Arguments represent movement of thought. We cannot "see" arguments. Sometimes I think we do not even have an adequate picture of the reasoning process (the syllogism and enthymeme are borrowed from formal logic). If we cannot "see" arguments, it is because they are relational--they represent relations among terms or ideas. In Daniel O'Keefe's definition argument is not a thing, it is a product of action. He said that argument-1 is a kind of communicative act, something one gives, presents, or utters. "He made an argument," is a phrase that describes argument-1. I contend that we can talk about the functions implied in the structure of an argument-1. In other words, we can ask: "What series of actions--giving evidence, organizing facts, defining terms, stating reasons--led to the conclusion?" Argument-1 is concerned with the functions of utterances in the process of composing an argument. The process is this: moving from something known, through something warranted, to something (a conclusion). That a product, an argument, implies action or motion is illustrated by the ordinary use of language:

1. We advance reasons, we put claims forward, and assertions must go beyond their data to prove anything.

2. One is led to a conclusion, reaches a conclusion, or comes to a conclusion on their own.

3. We say, "his point of departure for that view is. . ."

4. We ask, "how did you arrive at that. . .?"

5. One can find an argument moving, or refuse to change a position.

6. And when a speaker says "hence it follows," you can believe it insofar as you find it forceful.

One might even say, language is the vehicle of argument.

In an article titled "Kenneth Burke on Form," Robert Heath has provided a compilation of ideas that are useful for understanding what I mean here about argument-1 as an act that is the result of a process. Heath concludes: "Form is a process, an act. The form of discourse transpires over time to constitute a single act of expression."[13] The conclusion is elaborated in this way:

> Form as act is the discursive development of an idea. In this regard, "Forms are a journey. Such a journey will not only involve a succession of stages. Also, there will be static relations among the parts (though one may come upon them by various routes that make them, too, seem like a development)." Basic to form in discourse is one or more central ideas and adjacent ideas which are transformed or modified to reveal or prove a central theme.[14]

If there are conclusions to be drawn at this point, they are probably these: Argument is not merely a phenomenon to be described, it is an art of inventing reasons and arranging them skillfully, in a progression from something known to something new. Such a progression is limited and yet made possible by the use of language. So in a sense, for every argument there are two actors--the speaker and the language--and the interaction of an actor and his/her language produces our argument choices. I hypothesize that the more we can know about language (its functions, forces) the better we can generate arguments. . . and move to somethings new. As Whately said: "Of course

knowledge is necessary; so is straw to thatch the roof: but no quantity of materials will supply the want of knowing how to build."[15]

The Social Theory Approach

Contrary to the principles of the constructivist approach, the business of argument theorists should be to analyze the formal features of the argument situation (argument as a particular kind of communicative interaction) and describe the relationship among those features. A second contemporary argument theorist, Brant Burleson, has commented on this kind of analysis. He said:

> Theorists may develop a set of conceptual categories representing what they take to be the features common to all particular arguments, and then examine the formal relationships among them. . .To examine theoretic concepts in this fashion does no more violence to a process view of communication than does considering the formal adequacy of a set of grammatical rules.[16]

The Toulmin diagram provides one abstract model of the features relevant to argument-1. Burleson thought we should be able to discover a similar abstraction, appropriate for describing <u>argument-2</u>; and he suggested how we might do so. Elaborating the social theory approach, Burleson borrowed the procedural criteria (or model of formal features) supplied by Jürgen Habermas' "ideal speech situation," added it to Toulmin's field-dependent criteria for argument, and made this conclusion:

> the processes through which the merits of a claim are assessed have both a formal component (defined by the conditions of the ideal speech situation) and a substantive component (defined by the historically developed goals, ideals, and problems of the particular (field) in whose frame argument is conducted).[17]

Habermas' ideal speech situation--a field-invariant, universal, stable procedure to account for changes in beliefs and claims--is the rational criterion for argument-2, according to Burleson. Fundamental to this criterion of rationality are the assumptions of the theory of speech acts. The following reflections are intended to support the notion that speech as action is important to the study of argument, to explain the ideal speech situation as a model of formal features, and to demonstrate that one point strikes me as insufficiently worked out in the model.

According to the traditional view, language <u>says</u> something. Speakers give information or describe a state of affairs in the world and listeners can judge their utterances as true or false. According to the speech acts view, language is not only used to say something, but often to <u>do</u> something. In the phrases: "I warn," "I promise," "I do," and "I bet," to say something is to perform an action. "I promise" cannot be judged true or false--I have done it. (And in fact, no other act can create a promise). A second assumption in the speech acts view is that the basic unit of language is not the symbol, word, or sentence but the act of doing something in saying something. Third, it is important to understand the concept of the "force" of an utterance. Propositional acts cannot occur alone; one cannot just refer and predicate without some kind of force to indicate how the proposition is meant to be taken or what function the utterance is to serve. For example, in the question: "Can you reach the pan over the refrigerator?" the force of the proposition is a <u>request</u> for help; it is not an

inquiry to discover how high one can reach.

Formally, we can express the two essential parts of a speech act in this way: F (p) where the variable "F" takes forces as values and "p" takes expressions for propositions. John Searle contends that the force indicating devices in English include "at least": word order, stress, intonation contour, punctuation, the mood of the verb, and the so-called performative verbs.[18] The principal aim of speech acts theory is to clarify the performative status of linguistic utterances.[19] A task not "performed" with formal logic, says Habermas, because there we treat propositions as if they exist independently of forces.[20]

Habermas' thesis is that the ability to engage in everyday communication presupposes the existence of a set of rational standards. The ideal speech situation is a transcendental set of norms to which speakers are subject the moment they perform or understand or respond to a speech act.[21] In performing any speech action, Habermas says, anyone "acting communicatively" must raise universal validity claims and suppose that they can be vindicated.[22] In normal communication, these validity claims demand that interactants both assume that the other is uttering intelligible sentences, speaking the truth, expressing himself sincerely, and acting appropriately with respect to relevant social norms. Such assumptions form what Habermas calls a "background consensus," and they are supposedly fulfilled in the flow of everyday communication. In argument-contexts, however, Habermas says one or more of these rational standards

are unfulfilled. So he developed a "logic of discourse," or method to recover rational consensus, by classifying types of performative verbs.

If the intelligibility of an utterance becomes problematic, we explicate the sense of the utterance through communicative speech acts (say, express, convey: i.e. How do you mean?). If the truth of the propositional content of the utterance is problematic, we explain the validity of the proposition through constative speech acts (assert, describe, explain: i.e. Is it really the way you say it is?). When the rightness of a rule of appropriateness is questioned, we justify this rule through regulative speech acts (allow, warn, command: i.e. Why did you do that?). Finally, when the sincerity of a speaker is doubted, we appeal to representative speech acts (admit, confess, conceal, deny--with like, wish, or want: Are they deceiving me?).[23] According to Habermas, since the universal validity claims (the grammaticality of sentences, the truth of hypotheses, the rightness of norms of action, the consistency of propositions) underlie the intuitive evaluations of language users, the recovery of rational consensus through the "logic of discourse" is a universal capability, not the ability of only particular individuals.[24] In sum, the logic relies on the notion of the "force" of utterances, applies to argument contexts in general, and is concerned with validity.

No doubt concern for a model of the formal characteristics that pertain to the process of argument (a "good argument-2") attracted Burleson to the ideal speech situation. While this

model seems to respond to the concern for characterizing argument-2, so far as I can see, two related points of view have not been considered sufficiently in the discussion: the notion that procedure may be a process, and that the study of argument must account for the process of invention in addition to validity.

What are the implications for argument theory and criticism if the theme "procedure itself is a process" receives <u>emphasis</u> in our study? The question implies that there could be several procedures, or a procedure capable of evolution, which legitimizes changes within a community of arguers. Toulmin believes that a procedure evolves:

> . . ."a man demonstrates his rationality, not by a commitment to fixed ideas, stereotyped procedures, or immutable concepts, but by the manner in which and the occasions on which, he changes those ideas, procedures, and concepts.". . .Toulmin emphasizes that the selection and implementation of concepts, strategies, and procedures within a discipline is a <u>social</u> process. . . .The ideals of a discipline. . .conjoined with that discipline's core of unresolved problems serve to order the processes of conceptual innovation and selection.[25]

In other words, there is a process whereby procedures emerge out of the clash between the unanswered questions and the fixed beliefs of a given community of arguers.

Can the ideal speech situation account for changes in validity claims? Of course, it can. The moment that "background consensus" is shaken, and the presupposition that certain validity claims are satisfied is suspended, the task of understanding is to achieve a new definition of the situation which all participants can share.[26] And such understanding is achieved by using the apparently exhaustive typology of performative verbs.

But to say that Habermas' "logic of discourse" can account for change in validity claims when the normal justification of them is problematic, is to emphasize the theme of universal validity more than the process of change. If we are to presume an exhaustive typology of speech acts can account for the process of argument, it seems we are not making provisions for the procedure of invention in our theory. How do we produce justificatory arguments? How do we make the transition from a private discovery to the invention of the corresponding "public" justification? Habermas gives us a hint when he says that intuitive knowledge is capable of being discursively justified. He writes:

> . . .the implicit knowledge has to be brought to consciousness through the choice of suitable examples and counterexamples, through contrast and similarity relations, through translation, paraphrase, and so on. . .[27]

But I think we could give more than a hint, and specify the "and so on," through attention to the role of "force" in the process of invention.

From my reading of Habermas, I take it that he intends his typology of performative verbs in the "logic of discourse" to be exhaustive because he says, "The three general pragmatic functions (in language, i.e. to represent, to express one's intentions, and to establish relationships) are the basis of all the particular functions that an utterance can assume in specific contexts," and because he says, ". . .a suitable performative expression is either available or, if necessary, can be introduced through the specification of available expressions."[28]

The analysis of what Austin called the illocutionary force led Habermas to the validity basis of speech. An analysis of what John Searle said about illocutionary force has led me to conclude there must be an invention basis of speech, too. In what seems contrary to Habermas, Searle presents us with the notion that forces are not only <u>available</u>--new forces can emerge. The following statements serve to support this contention. Searle writes that the force indicating devices in English include "at least": word order, stress, punctuation, intonation contour, the mood of the verb, and the performative verbs; thus leaving open the possibility that new force indicating devices may be found. Also, articulating the "principle of expressibility"--that whatever can be meant can be said--Searle says:

> I can in principle if not in fact increase my knowledge of the language, or more radically, if the existing language or existing languages are not adequate to the task,. . .I can in principle at least enrich the language by introducing new terms or other devices into it. Any language provides us with a finite set of words and syntactical forms for saying what we mean, but where there is. . .an upper bound on the expressible,. . . it is a contingent fact and not a necessary truth.[29]

I think that the possible uncoupling and recoupling of forces with various propositions can result in the transformation of speech acts and the formation (or invention) of utterances for "public" justificatory argument. I agree with Searle that language is rule-governed intentional behavior, and that implies that a speaker's intentions and the conventions of language can clash in unpredictable ways. I have returned to the claims stated earlier: the interaction of the speaker and his/her

language produces our argument choices; and the more we can know about the functions of language, the better we can produce arguments.

Reason, Validity, and Force

Toulmin's main contribution to argument theory was to say that these terms important to argument--validity, strength, shaky, conclusive, good, impossible, possible, probable, etc.--all have two aspects: (1)force (2)relevant criteria. Toulmin devoted most of his energy and attention to ground. The force of arguments may be the same, he pointed out, while the backing called for by warrants varies from field to field.[30] Since he made his contribution to ground primarily, not force, he attended to difference, not sameness. So there was room for a theory about invariant force. Now argument theorists have some expanding to do because Toulmin narrowed his interest to the assessment of justificatory arguments. (He thought that the primary function of arguments was to justify, and that the other functions arguments serve must be parasitic on this primary function).[31]

The social theory approach to argument provided an analysis of the formal properties of force regardless of the field in which argument occurs: intelligibility, truthfulness, sincerity, and appropriateness. But if we are interested in invention and progress, there should be no <u>a priori</u> exhaustive typology we work towards as an ideal. There are more kinds and levels of forces and performative verbs than the ideal speech situation allows. We need a theory of "force" (functions) and one that can account for the other phase of the argument process--to invent publicly presentable arguments.

The conclusion that argument composition involves two phases--discovery and justification--is at least as old as Richard Whately. But the conclusion suggests a question for contemporary argument theory which could replace, "What is the relationship of argument-1 to argument-2?". The question is: Within our language system, regardless of the field of argument, what conscious control of forces (functions of language) can help us move from the private discovery of arguments to their public justification? We should create a classification of the kinds and levels of functions of language peculiar to the process of argument. In a sense, such a typology of functions could represent a new topoi from speech acts which could be used in addition to, not excluding the ideal speech situation, Chaim Perelman's loci of argument, Karl Wallace's topoi of invention, or any other topical system rhetoric has, such as Aristotle's. A start at the verbs important to classify might be:

think/infer/argue
accept/reject
prove/probe
instruct/convince/explain
establish/account for

division/generalization
warrant-use/warrant-establish
combine/separate
distinguish/transcend
add/subtract
extend/reduce
include/exclude
associate/dissociate
define/consider ramifications

and/or
even if/yes but

refute/dispute/rebut/deny/challenge

"refute" can function in these four ways:
undermine (credibility)
reduce (importance)
expose (inconsistency)
turn the tables

Different theorists or practitioners could also be classified according to the function they give priority to in argument. For instance,

	Toulmin	justify
Henry	Johnstone	transcend the self
	Whately	convince
	Perelman	persuade
	Socrates	instruct

Further, we could consider how the various functions that are taken to be primary in argument theories are compatible.

Different verbs imply different relationships in the progress of an argument, just as the change of transitions do in writing ("and" indicates similarity, "but" indicates contrast, and "hence" implies a cause-effect relationship). And if we are dealing with a series of propositions, that we have to order so as to lead to a conclusion, then the speech acts focus on propositions with forces would seem to be helpful. I admit that the merit of a claim, or even the invention of one is not decided solely on structural grounds. But if one can be right, or have an interesting notion but lack the structure to communicate it in, then this question is an important one: What order and what functions do X propositions have to take on to produce a cogent structure?

"Cogent" means forcibly convincing, from the Latin meaning "to force, drive together." The ordinary usage of "cogent," as is true of coherent and consistent, has to do with force and order: a series of acts are so ordered that accepting part of the order, you are forced or driven to accept the rest. Force is a criteria for rationality. As Passmore said in Philosophical Reasoning, "every valid argument 'forces' in the sense that it

restricts freedom of movement, but no argument forces absolutely." Linguistic cogency should be our rational criterion in practical argument. To conclude, the future of argument theory is in the philosophical perspective. Ray McKerrow would probably say that involves reasons and validity, I have suggested that we add "force."

Notes

[1]Wayne Brockriede, "Where is Argument?" Journal of the American Forensic Association 11 (Spring 1975).

[2]Ibid., p. 179.

[3]Wayne Brockriede, "Characteristics of Arguments and Arguing," Journal of the American Forensic Association 13 (Winter 1977): 130.

[4]Daniel O'Keefe, "Two Concepts of Argument," Journal of the American Forensic Association 13 (Winter 1977): 121.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Charles Willard, "A Reformulation of the Concept of Argument: The Constructivist/Interactionist Foundations of a Sociology of Argument," Journal of the American Forensic Association 14 (Winter 1978): 124.

[7]Charles Willard, "The Epistemic Functions of Argument: Reasoning and Decision-making from a Constructivist/Interactionist Point of View," Journal of the American Forensic Association 15 (Winter 1979): 186.

[8]Charles Willard, "A Reformulation of the Concept of Argument: The Constructivist/Interactionist Foundations of a Sociology of Argument," p. 126.

[9]Brant Burleson, "On the Analysis and Criticism of Arguments: Some Theoretical and Methodological Considerations," Journal of the American Forensic Association 15 (Winter 1979): 139.

[10]Charles Willard, "A Reformulation of the Concept of Argument: The Constructivist/Interactionist Foundations of a Sociology of Argument," p. 132.

[11]Ibid., p. 130.

[12]John Searle, Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 19.

[13]Robert Heath, "Kenneth Burke on Form," Quarterly Journal of Speech 4 (December 1979): 404.

[14]Ibid., pp. 397-398.

[15]Douglas Ehninger, ed., Elements of Rhetoric (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Press, 1963), p. 15.

[16]Brant Burleson, "On the Analysis and Criticism of Arguments: Some Theoretical and Methodological Considerations," p. 143.

[17]Brant Burleson, "On the Foundations of Rationality: Toulmin, Habermas and the a priori of Reason," Journal of the American Forensic Association 16 (Fall 1979): 125.

[18]John Searle, Speech Acts, p. 30.

[19]Jürgen Habermas, Communication and the Evolution of Society, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Bacon Press, 1979), p. 34.

[20]Ibid., p. 36.

[21]Ibid., p. 2.

[22]Ibid.

[23]Brant R. Burleson and Susan L. Kline, "Habermas' Theory of Communication: A Critical Explication," Quarterly Journal of Speech 4 (December 1979): 415-416.

[24]Jürgen Habermas, Communication and the Evolution of Society, p. 14.

[25]Brant Burleson, "On the Foundations of Rationality: Toulmin, Habermas and the a priori of Reason," p. 114.

[26]Jürgen Habermas, Communication and the Evolution of Society, p. 3.

[27]Ibid., p. 19.

[28]Ibid., pp. 33, 40.

[29]John Searle, Speech Acts, pp. 19-20.

[30]Stephen Toulmin, The Uses of Argument (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1958): 112.

[31]Ibid., p. 12.